

# Delusion, and the Road to Dictatorship

by Steve Douglas

When U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the suspension of the “Church Committee Guidelines/Restrictions” on the activities of the FBI and other agencies of the U.S. Justice Department on May 30, the United States took another giant step in the direction of becoming the hell that was the Nazi Germany dictatorship of the 1930s. In the name of “combating terrorism,” Ashcroft lifted the restrictions that had been properly imposed on the Justice Department by the U.S. Congress during the 1970s, in the wake of Sen. Frank Church’s committee hearings, which had documented rampant DOJ illegal operations, involving abuse of Americans’ civil and constitutional rights.

Lyndon LaRouche warned that Ashcroft would implement such totalitarian measures, in January 2001, as he campaigned against Ashcroft’s confirmation as Attorney General. In testimony presented to the U.S. Senate Jan. 16, LaRouche spokesperson Debra H. Freeman cautioned against the “Reichstag Fire”-like implications of Ashcroft’s appointment: “The incoming Administration will be faced, immediately, with the choice between: 1) abandoning the current economic and monetary policy axioms and returning to policies that, in the past, have led the United States and the world out of the path of disaster, as during the Presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt; or, 2) under the guise of ‘crisis management,’ imposing a form of brutal bureaucratic fascism on the United States, that bears striking similarities to the conditions under which Adolf Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933. It was Hitler’s ‘crisis management’ of the Reichstag fire and other events, real and manufactured, that established the dictatorship that no one in Germany had anticipated, even weeks before the coup was carried out. Unlike ‘normal times,’ the realities of the present crisis period mean that there is no middle ground between these two polar extremes. The luxury of ‘muddling through’ for the next four years is no longer on the table.”

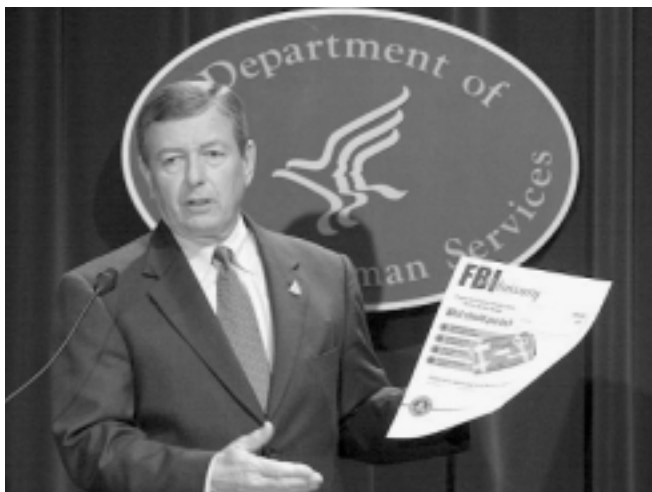
*Like Hitler’s use of the Reichstag fire in 1933 (right), to impose his dictatorship, the 9/11 coup plotters are using the pretext of a war on terrorism to rip up the U.S. Constitution. The remains of the World Trade Center (below).*



National Archives



FEMA/Michael Rieger



U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services  
*U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, shown here on Oct. 12, 2001, one month after the Sept. 11 attempted coup d'état.*

The question is posed: Will the American people come to their senses, heed LaRouche, and recognize that we are confronted with a danger that is of precisely the same character that the people of Germany faced during 1933 and 1934, as Hitler came to power—and mobilize accordingly? Will we learn from the German people's mistakes, and prevent the advent of something far more murderous from taking over the United States in 2002 and 2003? Unfortunately, the American population's decades-long love affair with Hollywood has dimmed its historical sense. All too many movie- and television-stupefied Americans have come to adopt the formulation that "German = totalitarian = Nazi," just as surely as they are now being dutifully conditioned to adopt the belief that "Arab = terrorist = threat to the U.S.A." Americans would do well to junk their Hollywood-induced, stereotype delusions, and listen to LaRouche, and reflect upon what actually happened—and did not happen—in 1933-1934 in Germany, so as to ensure that we do not commit the same errors, again. It is to that purpose, that this summary overview is dedicated.

## The Seizure of Power

Adolf Hitler was installed as Chancellor of Germany on Jan. 30, 1933, by the aged President Paul von Hindenburg, during the depths of a raging world depression. Michael Liebig has amply documented how Anglo-American financial circles, intent upon unleashing Germany in a war against Russia, placed Hitler into power through machinations, including blackmail, involving President Hindenburg's son and advisor, Oskar.<sup>1</sup> Hitler's hold on power as he was sworn in as Chancellor, was anything but absolute. His Nazi Party, while remaining the largest party in Germany, had taken a horrible beating in the previous national elections. On Nov. 6, 1932, it lost over 2 million votes relative to its July 1932

totals, as it received only 33% of the vote. Moreover, by December, Gregor Strasser, one of the Nazi Party's leading figures, had organized an intra-party revolt against Hitler. And now, even though Hitler had been installed as Chancellor, his Nazi Party remained in the distinct minority in his own cabinet, holding only three of the eleven posts. Furthermore, the treacherous technocrat Franz von Papen, a former Chancellor and close personal friend of President Hindenburg, was named Hitler's Vice-Chancellor. He had secured a promise from Hindenburg, that Hitler would never be allowed to meet with the President except when in the presence of Papen, who was to act as a kind of "Co-Chancellor," and keep Hitler on a "short leash."

In his first cabinet meeting on Jan. 30, Hitler proposed that new Reichstag elections be held on March 5, hoping that his Nazis would be able to secure a majority of the vote. The members of the cabinet endorsed Hitler's call for elections, but only after he assured them that the cabinet's composition would remain unchanged—irrespective of the outcome of the elections. They, like von Papen, were deluded in their belief that they were effectively "controlling" Hitler and the government. Hitler was well aware of the precarious nature of his position. He had been installed by powerful financial forces from Wall Street and the City of London, but Germany remained in chaos, in the throes of the Great Depression. The Nazi Party constituted a minority of the German electorate, and there were still many powerful forces and institutions with which he had to contend, including the 100,000-man Reichswehr (army), the trade unions, state governments, the Protestant and Catholic churches, farmers' organizations, and German industrial interests. One misstep on his part, and he could find his government more short-lived than either the six-month regime of von Papen, or the 57-day tenure of his predecessor Gen. Kurt von Schleicher. He tempered his rhetoric accordingly, so that: 1) he could buy time for his job-creation program to take effect; and 2) the necessary groundwork could be laid for the "national security incident," which was to serve as the convenient pretext for the suspension of constitutional rule, and the advent of rule by emergency decree.

There can be little doubt that the rapid success of Hitler's anti-Depression employment programs bought him incredible forbearance—if not willful blindness, in the population-at-large—when it came to tolerating and overlooking Nazi brutality. Germans were desperate for jobs, and Hitler was the first Chancellor in over four years to do something about it, even if he and his Anglophile "economic wizard," Hjalmar Schacht, had to implement partial—and certainly distorted—elements of infrastructure-development programs that had been designed by anti-Nazis.<sup>2</sup>

As Hitler took office, nearly 6.5 million Germans were unemployed out of a workforce of approximately 30 million—a staggering 22% official unemployment rate! The average household income had dropped by fully 40%

between 1929 and 1933. The dimension of Hitler's success in the fight against unemployment was dramatic. Within just one year, government-sponsored and -subsidized programs for factory and housing construction, highways, infrastructure projects, coupled with the early phases of a disguised but massive rearmament program, had reduced unemployment by more than 2 million, or over 30%.

### **'National Renewal,' not 'Revolution'**

But, before Hitler could derive the full political benefits from his jobs program, he still had to court various constituencies, to soften them up for the kill. So, for example, in the days immediately after his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler spoke not of a national or National Socialist (Nazi) revolution, but rather of a national renewal—pivoted on the outlook of nationalist forces that yearned for a return to the glorious days of the political majesty and power of the 1870s, and an end to the stagnation, weakness, and hyperinflationary chaos of the 14-year-old Weimar Republic.

While Hitler continued to train his verbal fire on the Bolshevik/Red menace, he insisted that physical restraint be exercised by his Nazi followers, as his propaganda chief Josef Goebbels reported in his diary on Jan. 31, 1933: "In a conference with the Führer we lay down the line for the fight against the Red terror. For the moment, we shall abstain from direct countermeasures. The Bolshevik attempt at revolution must first burst into flame. At the proper moment we shall strike."<sup>3</sup>

Later, on March 10, Hitler bluntly told the members of his cabinet: "It is now necessary that we divert the attention of the public into the purely political arena, because we are still awaiting the [benefits of our] economic decisions."<sup>4</sup>

That Hitler's "national renewal" tactic had the desired effect of lulling various anti-Nazi, moderate/conservative-oriented Germans to sleep, is demonstrated by the March 31, 1933 commentary of the moderate-right news service Dienatag on the new Hitler government: "We have a dual-power situation, a kind of consular constitution, so to speak, in which both Chancellors [Hitler and Papen] can operate together. . . . I have the feeling, that the trust that Papen enjoys from President Hindenburg, is yet so strong, that it weighs more heavily than the power, which stands behind Hitler in the form of the Nazi Party."<sup>5</sup>

President Hindenburg loomed large as a source of delusion for the military, as well. Hindenburg was not only the President, he was the great World War I field marshal, winner of the legendary victory over the Russians at



*In this 1934 photo, Hitler is shown deferring to Hindenburg (center), as Nazi troops salute their Führer.*

Tannenberg. Hindenburg was their military, as well as civilian superior. He, as a two-term elected President of the Weimar Republic, represented the stability that the various Weimar Chancellors had not. However, the 86-year-old Hindenburg's stamina and health were already waning in 1933. His son, Oskar, functioned as a clearly compromised palace guard, having cut his deal/blackmail arrangement with the Nazis, in the fateful days prior to Hitler's appointment. Yet the highest echelons of the Reichswehr chose to ignore this obvious state of affairs.

The Reichswehr represented the most formidable institution of state at this time—the one uniquely capable of preserving order and the constitution, should it choose to do so. The Reichswehr had bristled, since its inception after World War I, under the onerous restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles. Not only was it limited to 100,000 men; it was also prohibited from forming an Air Force, or building any tracked vehicles (tanks), as well from reestablishing the famous Kriegsakademie (War College) of the German General Staff, among other restrictions. General von Seeckt, Reichswehr commander until 1926, demanded that the members of the Reichswehr operate as "nur Soldaten"—"only soldiers"—and take no responsibility for shaping the policy of the nation. They were to function as mere military operatives—confining themselves narrowly to matters of the battlefield and combat—rather than the thinking citizen-soldier of the great Gerhard von Scharnhorst tradition that was forged in the crucible of the Liberation Wars against Napoleon in the early 19th Century.

Hitler made it his top priority to meet with the combined leadership of the Army and Navy. He did so at the home of Army Commander-in-Chief General von Hammerstein-Equord, on Feb. 2, only three days after becoming



*The case of Gen. Ludwig Beck is exemplary of the delusions that permeated the upper echelons of the German Army.*

Chancellor. He assured them that they could devote themselves almost exclusively to the task of rearming Germany. He also assured them that he considered them—and not the million-plus brown-shirted, heavily armed, paramilitary legions of the Sturmabteilung (SA), which was headed by his close friend and collaborator Ernst Röhm—to be the “sole bearers of arms” for the Reich. They were, unfortunately, thoroughly mollified.

The case of Gen. Ludwig Beck, who became the Chief of Staff of the Army in October 1933, is exemplary of the delusions that permeated the upper echelons of the German Army at this time. Beck stood at the very center of the resistance movement against Hitler, beginning in 1938. He resigned from his post in August, in protest against Hitler’s planned invasion of Czechoslovakia. He warned, in numerous written official studies at the time, that such an undertaking likely would precipitate a European-wide war, likely a world war, and ultimately, the destruction of Germany, even if the invasion were, initially “successful.”

Beck paid with his life on July 20, 1944, as the coup plot against Hitler ended in failure. But, in 1933, Beck optimistically greeted Hitler’s ascension to the Chancellorship with the comment that, it represented a “hopeful premise for the reestablishment of military equality” between Germany and other nations. Over approximately the next five years, Beck presided over the massive expansion and modernization of the German Army, which Hitler would ultimately use to destroy everything that was precious to Beck’s world outlook. Hitler confided to a member of his cabinet in 1938 that “Beck was the only officer he feared. ‘That man could really do something.’ ”

In 1934, before he had fully consolidated his hold on power, the one other senior officer whom Hitler truly feared, was Gen. Kurt von Schleicher, who had preceded Hitler as

Chancellor. Before the Anglo-Americans pulled the plug on his tenure in office, Schleicher had assembled a combination of trade union, political, and military layers that were committed to implementing his government-backed plan for large-scale infrastructure construction that would have enabled Germany to overcome its unemployment problem by building its way out of the Depression. Hitler deployed Himmler’s SS thugs to murder Schleicher and his wife, along with General von Bredow, Schleicher’s adjutant, on the night of June 30, 1934—the so-called “Night of the Long Knives.” That was the night, 17 months to the day, after he had been sworn in as Chancellor, that Hitler conducted a blood purge against his political enemies, resulting in the murders of hundreds—and perhaps as many as 1,000—of his opponents. In a testament to the degenerate nature and extent of the *nur soldat* syndrome that had come to permeate the leadership of the German Armed Forces, virtually no one even raised his voice in protest. Many of the military leaders maintained their silence for detestably opportunistic reasons: They were relieved to see hundreds of brown-shirted SA leaders “eliminated,” since these thugs had been threatening to supplant the role of the Reichwehr as the “sole bearer of arms” for the German nation. Hitler claimed during a speech to the Reichstag (lower house of Parliament) on July 13, that he had received “evidence” that Schleicher had been consorting with the French, against German interests. He, of course, never produced that evidence, nor could he have done so, because the charge was untrue.

Hitler proceeded with nearly equal dispatch in his courtship of the major industrial interests in Germany. On Feb. 20, he had Hermann Göring—Minister of the Interior in Prussia and Minister without Portfolio in Hitler’s Reich Cabinet—and Hjalmar Schacht, host several dozen of Germany’s leading industrialists, so that Hitler could address them candidly, “off-the-record,” about his intentions. Since minutes of that meeting survived the war, and were entered into evidence at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, we know much of what actually happened there.

Hitler promised an all-out rearmament drive, saying, “All the worldly goods we possess we owe to the struggle of the chosen. . . . We must not forget that all the benefits of culture must be introduced with a more or less iron fist.” He pledged to “eliminate” the Marxists, and suppress the unions. Saying that March 5 would be “the last election” in Germany, he said that, “regardless of the outcome, there will be no retreat.” He would remain in power “by other means . . . with other weapons,” if necessary. Göring motivated the select audience to make large financial contributions to the Nazi Party election effort by observing, “surely [the burden] would be much easier to bear if it were realized that the election of March 5 will surely be the last one for the next ten years, probably even for the next hundred years.”

Gustav Krupp, the powerful munitions magnate who had vigorously lobbied Hindenburg against a Hitler

Chancellorship as late as Jan. 29, enthusiastically embraced Hitler's perspective on the spot, and encouraged others to do so. Dr. Schacht later reported to the Nuremberg Tribunal that, he, personally, collected 3 million marks for the Nazi election campaign that night.

## The Last 'Democratic' Election

Calls for decorum and restraint notwithstanding, the "election campaign" was an utterly brutal one. In early February, Hitler's government banned all Communist Party (KPD) meetings, and banned their press. Leading Socialist newspapers were also suspended, and Social Democratic Party meetings were alternately banned or broken up by Röhm's brown-shirted SA thugs. The Catholic Center Party was also targeted for SA disruption. Fifty-one anti-Nazi activists were reported as murdered during the 34-day campaign, while the Nazis claimed that 18 of their members were killed.

Events took a dramatic turn for the worse on Feb. 27, 1933. That night, the Reichstag—the German equivalent of the U.S. Capitol—was burned down. While a mentally unstable Dutch Communist by the name of Marinus van der Lühbe was ultimately convicted and executed for the crime, it is clear that he was no more physically or mentally capable of having been the mastermind/perpetrator of the crime, than Lee Harvey Oswald was with respect to President Kennedy, or Osama bin Laden is, with respect to the events of Sept. 11. Expert testimony at van der Lühbe's trial established that, such vast quantities of gasoline and chemicals were ignited, in so many widely dispersed locations within the Reichstag, at virtually the same moment, that no one—especially the mentally enfeebled van der Lühbe—could have committed the crime by himself.

Furthermore, a high degree of sophistication and coordination involving numbers of additional conspirators, would have been required to circumvent the security screen that protected the building, so as to place the chemicals and gasoline at their targetted areas in a timely fashion. The "evidence" purporting to prove the "van der Lühbe Communist conspiracy" was so flimsy that the four other Communists who were put on trial along with van der Lühbe, were all acquitted by the Supreme Court of Leipzig.

At the Nuremberg trials after World War II, Gen. Franz Halder, the Chief of Staff of the German Army until late in 1942, testified that Göring had boasted to him that he (Göring) was the one responsible for the Reichstag fire: "At a luncheon on the birthday of the Führer in 1942, the conversation turned to the topic of the Reichstag building and its artistic value. I heard with my own ears when Göring interrupted the conversation and shouted: 'The only one who really knows about the

Reichstag fire is I, because I set it on fire!' With that he slapped his thigh with the flat of his hand."

Also at Nuremberg, the former Gestapo (secret police) chief in Prussia, Rudolf Diels, testified: "Göring knew exactly how the fire was to be started" and ordered me to prepare, prior to the fire, a list of people who were to be arrested immediately after it." Göring had no trouble conducting a cover-up of the crime, since he, in his capacity as the Interior Minister of Prussia, was responsible for overseeing the "law enforcement" investigation into the crime!

On the day after the fire, the Göring-von Papen Prussian government issued a long statement, claiming that it had found Communist documents which "proved" that: "Government buildings, museums, mansions and essentials plants were to be burned down. ... Women and children were to be sent in front of terrorist groups. ... The burning of the Reichstag was to be the signal for a bloody insurrection and civil war. ... It has been ascertained that today was to have seen throughout Germany terrorist acts against individual persons, against private property, and against the life and limb of the peaceful population, and also the beginning of general civil war."<sup>6</sup>

Göring's Prussian government promised to publish the "documents proving the Communist conspiracy," but somehow it never got around to doing so.

## Rule by Emergency Decree

Meanwhile, on the same day, Feb. 28, Hitler prevailed upon Hindenburg to sign an emergency decree—Notverordnung—"for the Protection of the People and the State." It suspended seven sections of the constitution which guaranteed individual and civil liberties. It specified that: "Restrictions on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press; on the rights of assembly and association; and violations of the privacy of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications; and warrants for house searches, orders for confiscations as well as restrictions on property, are also permissible beyond the



Bundesarchiv

*Van der Lühbe, shown here at his "trial," was the Osama bin Laden-like scapegoat for the Reichstag fire.*

legal limits otherwise prescribed.”

This emergency decree also authorized the Reich administration of Hitler to take over the functioning of any state government, if it were deemed necessary.

Armed with the dictatorial powers of the *Notverordnung*, Hitler jailed over 4,000 Communist officials, as well as large numbers of Social Democratic and Liberal leaders, during the concluding week of the campaign. More restrictions were slapped on the non-Nazi and non-Nationalist press. Even members of the Reichstag, who were supposed to be immune from arrest, were incarcerated.

With Hitler’s propaganda chief Josef Goebbels doing the orchestrating, the full weight of the government was deployed on behalf of the Nazi Party election effort. Goebbels pioneered the large-scale bringing Hitler’s campaign events and speeches to every hamlet and village in the country. The effects of Hitler’s campaign spending and brown-shirted thuggery were thus amplified manifold.

With all that, the Nazis won only 44% of the vote on March 5, falling well short of the majority Hitler had demanded. The National Socialists received 17,277,180 votes. Their opponents votes broke down as follows: Catholic Center, 4,424,900; Catholic Bavarian, 1,075,100; Social Democrats, 7,181,629; Communist, 4,848,058; Nationalist, 3,136,760. While the Communists had lost approximately 1 million votes since the November 1932 election, as a consequence of Hitler’s reign of terror against them, every other non-Nazi Party maintained their previous levels. The Nazis gained fewer than 4 million new votes. Hitler had been denied the absolute majority that he had craved, and with it, the mandate for the Nazi dictatorship that he fully intended to institute.

## The Enabling Law

What did the non-Nazi majority of his cabinet and the newly-elected Reichstag proceed to do? They congratulated Hitler on his fine campaign. Worse, on March 23, they proceeded to enact, by overwhelming majority, the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* the “Enabling Law.” It was this law which ratified Hitler’s virtually unlimited powers to rule by emergency decree, as was otherwise specified in the *Notverordnung* of Feb. 28. This act constituted a legislative initiative of practically historically unrivalled self-delusion and suicidal madness (with the possible exception of some of the recent and ongoing conduct of the U.S. Congress). Since the passage of the Enabling Law embodies the distilled essence of the form of delusion which grips the American people and their correspondingly deluded elected representatives today, as Lyndon LaRouche outlines in his essay “Once Again, They Have Fooled You,”<sup>7</sup> it is worth examining the circumstances surrounding this particular, lamentable, historical moment in some detail.

More than an absolute majority for the Nazi Party in the Reichstag, Hitler wanted complete freedom from the “shackles” of the Weimar Constitution. He enjoyed virtually unlim-

ited powers in the form of the Feb. 28 *Notverordnung*, and could, therefore, arbitrarily circumvent it, given the declared state of emergency. Yet, obsessed as he was with maintaining both the appearance of overwhelming public support and a plausible veneer of “legality,” Hitler demanded a change in the Weimar Constitution which would grant him virtually dictatorial powers for an open-ended period of time. Since any constitutional change required the approval of at least two-thirds of the Reichstag, Hitler busied himself with the negotiations and the political theater that would be necessary to secure this objective.

The Nazi Party had 288 seats in the Reichstag, and its collaborators in the Nationalist Party had 52 seats, giving Hitler 340 votes upon which he could rely. Since there were 647 seats in the Reichstag, at least 432 votes were required to secure a two-thirds majority. If one declared the 81 Communist members to be “ineligible” for seating, as Hitler’s government ultimately did—and did so “legally” under the *Notverordnung*—then there would be only 566 seats in the Reichstag, and 378 votes would therefore represent the requisite two-thirds majority. Hitler courted the Catholic Center Party of Monsignor Kaas and former Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, to put himself over this threshold, accordingly.

He did so against the backdrop of the spectacular political theater that he and his newly appointed cabinet member Minister of Propaganda, Josef Goebbels, staged at Potsdam. The anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, gnostic Adolf Hitler selected the Christian Garrison Church in Potsdam, where the bones of Frederick the Great lay buried, and where the Hohenzollern Kings had worshipped, as the centerpiece for all activities associated with the opening session of the new Reichstag. He specified March 21 as inauguration day, because that was the anniversary of the Reichstag meeting of March 21, 1871, at which Bismarck had launched the “Second Reich.”

No effort was spared in the quest to evoke a sense of veneration for the great national heroes of the preceding 200 years. Hitler wanted to present his Nazis as an extension of that imperial tradition. World War I field marshals and generals, along with officers of the Reichswehr, resplendent in their medals and dress uniforms, filled the Garrison Church, as military honor guards, SA, SS, and Reichswehr contingents paraded through the streets.

In a brief, but emotionally-charged ceremony, President Hindenburg saluted the empty seat of Kaiser Wilhelm II in the imperial gallery, and proceeded to give his blessing to Hitler’s government: “May the old spirit of this celebrated shrine permeate the generation of today, may it liberate us from selfishness and party strife and bring us together in national self-consciousness to bless a proud and free Germany, united in herself.”

Hitler responded by “reverently” addressing Hindenburg: “By a unique upheaval in the last few weeks, our national honor has been restored and, thanks to your understanding,



*May Day 1933. The deluded SPD and labor unions march under the Nazi banner in Berlin.*

Herr Generalfeldmarschall, the union between the symbols of the old greatness and the new strength has been celebrated. We pay you homage. A protective Providence places you over the new forces in our nation.”

Hitler’s theatrics made a profound impression on both his German and his international audience. The French Ambassador to Germany witnessed the spectacle and mused: “After the dazzling pledge made by Hitler at Potsdam, how could such men—Hindenburg and his friends, the Junkers and monarchist barons, Hugenberg and his German Nationalists, the officers of the Reichswehr—how could they fail to dismiss the apprehension with which they had begun to view the excesses and abuses of his party? Could they now hesitate to grant him their entire confidence, to meet all his requests, to concede the full powers he claimed?”<sup>8</sup>

Hitler’s Potsdam machinations had achieved the desired effect. The credulous who wished to be deluded about his actual murderous intent, or who chose to blind themselves to the hideous strategic implications of his Anglo-American sponsorship, now had the theatrical pretext to do so. Nowhere were these delusions more rampant than in the “negotiations” that produced the Enabling Law.

### **‘Negotiations’ in Fantasy-Land**

The “discussions” which the members of the cabinet and various non-Nazi Party leaders conducted with Hitler, during March 1933, about various clauses and features of the Enabling Law, were colored by the following principal delusions: (1) Hitler was a “German” politician, just like them, and therefore would “play by the same rules”; (2) Hitler could be “tamed” by the combined forces of the German political establishment; (3) Hitler’s Anglo-American patronage need not be

addressed; (4) Hitler’s government would soon be shattered on the shoals of the world Depression; (5) Hitler was a “man of his word” who would “keep his political promises”; (6) President Hindenburg represented an effective and efficient institutional counterweight to Hitler’s most extreme tendencies; and (7) when in doubt, always opt for the “lesser evil.”

So, on March 23, even as one of the leading members of the all-important Catholic Center Party, Württemberg State President Bolz, spoke of the “most difficult situation since the advent of the Versailles Treaty,” and “fateful decisions” about the “unprecedented Ermächtigungsgesetz” (Enabling Law), the Center Party’s leader Monsignor Kaas, was offering words of reassurance to his restive and fearful Party members, based upon solemn promises that he had received from Herr Hitler! He told the Center Party Reichstag members

that Hitler had personally promised him that, even after the passage of the Enabling Law: (1) No measure contrary to the will of President Hindenburg would be implemented; (2) future laws adopted by his regime would be designed only after thorough consultation with a “working committee” of the Reichstag; (3) “equality before the law” would be maintained for everyone in Germany except Communist Party members; (4) Catholic Center Party officials would not be persecuted; (5) neither the existence of the individual German states nor the rights of the church would be limited; and (6) the judiciary would remain “independent”—free from any political interference. He concluded his speech motivating his party’s Reichstag members’ affirmation of the Enabling Law by reminding them of their duty to “prevent the worst” from happening. He observed that Hitler’s regime could achieve its designs “by other means,” and that it were better, therefore that it be done by this “legal” pathway.

It is also probable that Hitler swayed Monsignor Kaas with a pledge of his commitment to secure a Concordat with the Vatican. Negotiations did indeed begin shortly thereafter, which resulted in the signing of a treaty in July, which only served to enhance Hitler’s standing in the international community.

Perhaps the most prominent other leader of the Catholic Center Party was former Chancellor Heinrich Brüning. As Chancellor from 1930-32, his fiscally conservative policies had ensured Germany’s slide into the depths of the Depression. But his economic myopia did not entirely blind him to Hitler’s evil. In a speech on March 3, 1933, only two days before the elections, he declared that the Center Party was steadfastly opposed to any overthrow of the Weimar Constitution. He also demanded an investigation of the “sus-

picious” Reichstag fire. And he called on Hindenburg to “protect the oppressed against their oppressors.”

Brüning believed that Hitler would be brought down, as he himself had been, by the economic turbulence of the Depression. Until that happened, it were best to “avoid the worst” i.e., the Notverordnung, or Nazi seizure of absolute power “by other means,” by containing the Nazis through legislative measures. Then the legislative efforts of the Reichstag could be complemented by treaty agreements with other nations, that would supposedly serve to further hem in the Nazis.

After all, said Brüning, the Enabling Law included at least a minimum of important safeguards and restrictions against Hitler’s unbridled impulse for dictatorship. Among these safeguards, which non-Nazi opponents of Hitler had been allegedly able to extract from him were: 1) The Enabling Act empowered not Hitler personally, but rather the entire cabinet, to address the emergency conditions confronting Germany. It stipulated furthermore, that the Act had the force of law, only as long as two-thirds of the cabinet posts remained in non-Nazi hands; 2) it was subject to renewal or repeal, after four years; 3) it was prohibited from deviating from the Weimar Constitution, insofar as encroaching upon the independent existence of the Reichstag and the federal states was concerned; and 4) it was to constitute no form of limitation on the independent powers of the President. Indeed, Hitler swore to operate within these “limitations,” as he addressed the Reichstag on March 23, 1933, the day the Enabling Law was enacted into law:

“The government will make use of these powers only insofar as they are essential for carrying out vitally necessary measures. Neither the existence of the Reichstag nor that of the Reichsrat [the upper house of Parliament] is menaced. The position and rights of the President remain unaltered. . . . The separate existence of the federal states will not be done away with. The rights of the churches will not be diminished, and their relationship to the state will not be modified. The number of cases in which an internal necessity exists for having recourse to such a law is a limited one.”

With these “assurances” in hand, the Reichstag proceeded to enact this fateful legislation by a vote of 441-84. Ironically enough, only the Social Democrats voted against the bill. It was this same Social Democratic Party (SPD) whose political impotence and refusal to effectively promote either the economic recovery program of Dr. Wilhelm Lautenbach, or the mass jobs-creation/infrastructure development program of labor leader Wladimir Woytinsky, which the SPD leadership rejected as “inflationary,” which had done so much to pave the way for Hitler’s rise to the Chancellorship.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, Otto Wells, the leader of the SPD, rose to oppose the Enabling Act on March 23, when he said: “We German Social Democrats pledge ourselves solemnly in this historic hour to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and socialism. No Enabling Act can give you the

power to destroy the ideas which are eternal and indestructible.” An incensed Hitler shouted back at Wells: “You come late, but yet you come. . . . You are no longer needed. . . . The star of Germany will rise and yours will sink. Your death knell has sounded. . . . I do not want your votes. Germany will be free, but not through you!”

## Descent into Hell

The rapidity with which all of the institutions that Hitler had so piously pledged to protect, disappeared, is truly breathtaking. On April 7, he dissolved the separate powers of the historic Federal states, and absorbed them all as “administrative bodies” of the Reich. He appointed Reich “commissioners” to oversee the administration of these formerly proud and powerful entities. Under the constraints of the same Enabling Law, which Hitler had claimed would ensure that “the separate existence of the federal states will not be done away with,” no one raised a voice of efficient opposition. As for the Reichstag itself, within less than four months, it had become a one-party institution. On July 14, 1933, a law was decreed which declared:

“The National Socialist German Workers Party [Nazi] constitutes the only political party in Germany. Whoever undertakes to maintain the organizational structure of another political party or to form a new political party will be punished with penal servitude up to three years or with imprisonment of from six months to three years, if the deed is not subject to a greater penalty according to other regulations.”

What had happened to all of the other parties whose vote totals had amounted to 56% of the German electorate, on March 5? The Communist Party, with its 4,848,058 votes, had been banned from participation in the Reichstag, before the Potsdam session. In fact, Nazi Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick had boasted to a Nazi Party rally in Frankfurt on March 10: “We must end the practice of giving the Communists any say in local, state, or federal elected bodies. When on March 21, the new Reichstag convenes, the Communists will be prevented from participating—we will force them to useful work, instead. These ladies and gentlemen must be reacquainted with fruitful, productive labor. We will give them an opportunity for this in our Konzentrationslager [concentration camps]. If they reeducate themselves as useful members of society, then we will welcome them as fellow Germans. Otherwise, we will render them harmless over time.”

The Social Democratic Party, with its 7,181,629 votes, disappeared with nary a whimper. On May 10, Hermann Göring’s police seized the offices of the SPD and its newspaper. On May 19, hoping to curry renewed favor with Hitler, the SPD Reichstag faction voted unanimously in favor of Hitler’s foreign policy, and condemned those Social Democrats abroad, who dared to criticize Hitler. But their eleventh-hour propitiatory efforts proved to be of no avail, as Hitler formally banned the SPD on June 22, on the grounds that it was “subversive and inimical to the state.”



The Nationalist Party, with its 3,136,760 votes, the much-vaunted coalition partner of the Nazis, “voluntarily” dissolved on June 29. On that date, Alfred Hugenberg, who had initially served as Hitler’s Minister of Economics and Agriculture, resigned. Eight days prior, police and brownshirts had seized the Nationalist Party offices throughout the country.

The Catholic Bavarian People’s Party, with its 1,075,100 votes, dissolved itself on July 4.

The Catholic Center Party, with its 4,424,900 votes, the party which Hitler had so assiduously courted less than four months earlier, the party which had been the bulwark of the Weimar Republic, quietly dissolved itself on July 5. And so it was, that the majority of the non-Nazi Reichstag self-destructed, driven by its own wishful delusions, into a one-party rubber stamp for that Anglo-American-sponsored geopolitical madman otherwise known as Adolf Hitler.

## **The Nazi Labor Front**

The trade unions, with memberships totalling over 8 million workers, disappeared in an even more precipitous fashion. As was the case with the non-Nazi political parties, it was their own delusions that paved the way for their abrupt dissolution. The leadership, of course, had already badly discredited itself by failing to adopt either the Lautenbach or Woytinsky job creation/economic development plans. They compounded that strategic error by attempting to appease Hitler in early 1933. Or, to put it in a way that might be more understandable to Americans today, they tried to “go along to get along” with Hitler, in much the same ignorant, cowardly, and opportunistic way that the AFL-CIO opted to “go along to get along” with Al Gore and the Democratic Party leadership during the Democratic Party Presidential primary campaign of 2000.

On March 17, the chairman of the Christian Union Federation declared that his membership would be confining their attention to local economic and social concerns, and that they would leave the making of state policy to “others.” The time had arrived for the advent of a truly professional (i.e., non-political) people and workforce, according to the chairman. On March 21, the board of the ADGB, which represented more than 80% of Germany’s unionized workers, expressed its readiness to abandon all of its political functions and interests, and limit itself to the realm of purely and simply social concerns, “no matter what type of national government is established.”<sup>10</sup> Eight days later, the board promised to effect a complete break with the SPD which had so infuriated Hitler with its vote against the Enabling Law, as well as to begin “wide-ranging cooperation” with German employers.

The same deluded board appealed in vain in early April to President Hindenburg, beseeching him to curb Hitler’s brutal and blatantly illegal conduct against various trade unions. Hindenburg, not surprisingly, did nothing. On April 4, Hitler’s regime enacted a law entitled “Law on Factory Representation and Economic Association.” This law empowered any employer with the right to fire any employ-

ee on the grounds of “suspicion of activity inimical to the state,” at the same time that it excluded the employee from any right to appeal the employer’s action. Furthermore, the law stipulated that, “the highest state authorities, or another authority designated by said authorities, can order the termination of membership of such factory council members, who are engaged in economic or political activity that is contrary to the interests of the state. They can also select, from eligible personnel within the enterprise, the new factory council members.”

Thus, the Nazi authorities usurped for themselves virtually unlimited powers, to hire and fire within any particular firm. It was an ignoble day for the unions, who responded by grovelling all the more.

On April 10, Hitler had a law enacted, which declared May 1 to be “National Labor Day,” and as such, a paid holiday for all workers. Building upon his success from the spectacle at Potsdam, Hitler decided to devote a day of national celebration to the Nazi Party’s relationship to labor. The deluded and fearful trade union leadership circles were universally ecstatic about Hitler’s “overture of respect and appreciation” toward German labor, in his supposed recognition of labor’s traditional May Day holiday. One trade union paper even declared the May 1 holiday to be “The Day of Victory.”

Meanwhile, Hitler’s Nazi thugs were working furiously and secretly to prepare for the abolition of the trade union movement on May 2! Their efforts were headed up by Robert Ley, who would become notorious in the early weeks of May, as the head of the new Nazi Labor Front, which was to supplant the old (outlawed) trade union organizations. On April 21, with admonitions of “strictest secrecy,” Ley sent out a letter to all of the relevant Nazi Party, SA, and SS functionaries, informing them that “on Tuesday morning, May 2, at 10:00, the Gleichschaltung [elimination of opposition] actions against the free trade unions will commence.” They were to be supervised by the local Nazi Party gauleiters (district leaders). All bank accounts and offices were to be seized, and all the specified union officials and branch managers of the trade unions’ banks were to be taken into “protective custody,” i.e., thrown into concentration camps.

So, on May 1, even as Hitler was singing the praises of German labor at a rally of over 1.5 million people in Berlin, the Nazi police-state machinery was being set into motion for the physical annihilation of the trade unions the next day. What is particularly notable about the mass arrests of trade union leaders, and Nazi Party-SA seizure of offices and bank accounts, is that there was not even the hint of a legal pretext cited to justify the action! That is, the trade unions were not accused of violating any particular laws, nor were they even repressed by the state, as such. It was the Nazi Party and its SA brownshirts, not state or local police, who conducted the arrests and confiscations!

Such were the depths that Germany had descended to, under Hitler’s Enabling Law. Virtually no one raised a voice



Enactment of the April 1, 1933 anti-Jewish laws: The sign reads, "Germans, defend yourselves, do not buy from Jews."

in protest, as the criminal Robert Ley proudly proclaimed the birth of the Nazi Labor Front, dissolved all the trade unions, and absorbed their membership under his new umbrella.

The anti-Semitic Hitler enacted a law on April 1, proclaiming a boycott of Jewish shops. He also enacted laws excluding Jews from public service, the universities, and a variety of other professions. This was the beginning of the process of stripping the Jews of their citizenship—one of the first steps in the monstrous plan to dehumanize Germany's Jews, that led, inexorably, to the Final Solution, and the murder of 6 million Jews.

The anti-Christian Hitler launched an aborted campaign to establish a "German Christian" church. There were nearly 45 million Protestants in Germany, most of whom belonged to the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. Hitler wanted to establish a new "Reich Christian Church," which would be headed by his friend and fellow Nazi, Ludwig Müller. "Traditional" Protestants supported the candidacy of Friedrich von Bodelschwingh. As of the summer of 1933, there were about 3,000 of 17,000 Protestant pastors who were "German Christians," and an equal number of Protestant pastors in a group calling itself the "Confessional Church," which categorically rejected Hitler's and the "German Christians" ' anti-Semitism, racism, and other quackery. The

bulk of the Protestant Church failed to take a stand.

In July 1933, a constitution for a new "Reich Church" was submitted by representatives of the Protestant Church to the Reichstag. The Nazi Reichstag approved it on July 14, and a brutal campaign for the election of the first Reich Bishop broke out, immediately thereafter. The Nazi government engaged in heavy-handed intimidation of Bodelschwingh and his supporters, to a point where Bodelschwingh ultimately withdrew his candidacy. And so it was, that in September, Müller was "elected" to head the new Reich Church.

It was not long before the unspeakable vulgarity of the "German Christians" gave rise to an international incident. On Nov. 13, 1933, before a massive rally in the Sports Palace in Berlin, Dr. Reinhardt Krause, the local district leader of the "German Christian movement," "let it all hang out," so to speak. He proposed the abandonment of the Old Testament, and that the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament be revised so as to be brought into conformity "with the demands of National Socialism." Resolutions were presented demanding "One People, One Faith, One Reich." They also called upon all pastors to take an oath of allegiance to Hitler, and exclude all converted Jews. These antics proved to be such an embarrassment to Bishop Müller, that he was compelled to suspend and disavow Dr. Krause.

Unfortunately, the ministers who believed that they had accomplished something of substance, by merely disavowing the "German Christian" movement and expelling of Dr. Krause, were deluding themselves. Hitler did step back from his aggressive campaign to formally subordinate the Protestant Church to the Reich. But, he was shrewd enough to recognize, that the Protestants' imagined victory against him in this realm, was itself a valuable form of delusion that he could exploit in other theaters. For example: Where were the Protestant voices of protest to be heard, after Hitler liquidated his opposition in an orgy of mass murder on June 30, 1934? Having secured a nominal victory against Hitler's "German Christians" in their narrowly defined sphere of interest, they did not see the need to address the larger, more fundamental, and more horrifying realities threatening Germany. But for the noble Dietrich Bonhöffer—a leading Protestant pastor, who attempted to rally people against Hitler, and was executed by the Nazis in 1945—and a handful of others, the silence was deafening, and strategic thinking in these quarters was altogether lacking.

## The Blood Purge

Capitalizing on a combination of the delusions of his enemies and the terror that was unleashed in the population by Ernst Röhm's brutal SA legions, Hitler proceeded to further consolidate his one-party dictatorship in late 1933 and early 1934. Fifty concentration camps were established in the first year of his reign, where tens of thousands of "enemies of the state" were detained in "protective custody," without the benefit of trial or legal counsel. But even as he was strength-

ening his hold on the population-at-large, there were growing rumblings of unrest within his own party—within the SA, in particular. The ranks of Röhm's SA were expanding, as membership rolls exceeded 2 million. Röhm and some of his associates began to speak of themselves as the "People's Army," and talked of changes that should be made in the doctrines of the Armed Forces, accordingly. Röhm submitted a memorandum to the cabinet to the effect in February 1934. Many of Röhm's colleagues were speaking of the need to conduct the "second phase" of the yet uncompleted Nazi revolution. Hitler responded by reaffirming the Reichswehr as the "sole bearer of arms" for Germany, and by flatly rejecting the idea of a "second revolution." He otherwise praised Röhm's conduct in lavish terms, and lauded the "important work" that had been accomplished domestically by the SA.

As tensions between Hitler, the Reichswehr, and the SA increased during the Spring, Hitler finally resolved on a course of action, deploying Göring's special police and Heinrich Himmler's SS thugs to "liquidate" Röhm and the entire leadership of the SA in the "Night of the Long Knives."

He claimed in a speech to the Reichstag on July 13, that Röhm and all the others were involved in an insurrectionary plot against Germany. As in the case of the Reichstag fire, Hitler never produced a scintilla of evidence which substantiated his accusations. He defiantly declared to the deputies, "If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice, then all I can say is this: In this hour, I was responsible for the German people, and thereby I became the supreme judge of the German people."

Von Schleicher had allegedly conspired with a foreign diplomat against Germany, Hitler said. Unable to produce any evidence to this effect, Hitler railed that it was crime enough, that any German in the Third Reich would ever meet a foreign diplomat, without Hitler's personal knowledge: "When traitors in Germany arrange . . . a meeting with a foreign statesman . . . and give orders that no word of this meeting shall reach me, then I shall have the men shot dead, even when it should prove true that at such a consultation which was thus kept secret from me, they talked of nothing more than the weather, old coins, and like topics." Hitler's obedient cabinet had already "legalized" the slaughter, when on July 3, they had endorsed Hitler's actions as necessary for the "defense of the state."

Out of all the senior officers of the Wehrmacht, only General Hammerstein-Equord, who had been Commander-in-Chief of the Army at the time of the Machtergreifung, (seizure of power) raised a voice of strong condemnation against the murders of Schleicher and von Bredow. He organized the retired Field Marshal von Mackenson to join him in his protest campaign. Their efforts were pitiful-

ly limited, and succeeded in merely prompting Hitler to admit, on the occasion of a secret meeting of military leaders and party officials on Jan. 3, 1935, that the murder of the two generals had been "in error," and that their names would be restored to the honor rolls of their regiments.

As for the population-at-large, they had been desperately seeking relief from the rampages of Röhm's brown-shirted thugs. Hitler, in one unspeakably bloody, lawless evening, had apparently provided them that relief. But this was a numb population, whose former standards of law and justice had become warped and twisted by the preceding 18 months of non-stop convulsion. For example, one anti-Nazi activist who survived the Third Reich and wrote about this period, reported on several of the common, cynical expressions that "made the rounds" widely after June 30: "Better to shoot too early, than too late" and "Better one too many [murdered] than one too few."<sup>11</sup>

## The Final Consolidation

President Hindenburg died at 9:00 a.m., on Aug. 2, 1934, less than six weeks after Hitler's bloodbath. At noon, it was announced that Hitler's cabinet had enacted a law the preceding day, which combined the offices of the President and Chancellor, and that Adolf Hitler had assumed his new responsibilities as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The title of President was abolished, and Hitler was to be referred to thereafter as "Führer and Reich Chancellor."

Also, all members of the Armed Forces were required to swear a new oath which stated: "I swear by God this sacred oath, that I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people, Supreme



*Hitler greets Nazi "Reich Bishop" Ludwig Müller, following his successful takeover of the German Protestant Church.*

Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.” This new oath of personal fealty to Adolf Hitler—not to the German nation, nor to the office of the Führer, but to the one man—was to prove troubling, and debilitating in the years ahead, to those in the military who sought, albeit late, to mount a campaign of resistance against Hitler. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ludwig Beck was so disturbed by the implications of this oath, that he termed the day of the oath-taking “the blackest day of my life.” His brother reported in 1952, that Ludwig was stunned and surprised by the content of the oath:

“He often expressed to me later, that he could not forgive himself for not using his office as a rallying point against the oath. But he had been convinced by [the Army Commander-in-Chief] General von Fritsch, that under the existing circumstances, such a step would not have been possible, and the Wehrmacht would not have understood it, because already at that time, a whole group of high-ranking generals stood behind Hitler, and only a few of them were clear about the real consequences that the oath to Hitler’s person entailed.”

So it was, that on Aug. 19, 1934, the German people went to the polls in a plebiscite to “vote” on Hitler’s new leadership responsibilities. Ninety-five percent of the registered voters went to the polls, and over 90% voted to affirm Hitler as the “Führer.” That is, over 38 million Germans voted to ratify Hitler as Führer, and approximately 4,250,000 voted

against the Führer. Only 18 months earlier, Hitler had received fewer than 17,300,000 votes, in a multi-party election, in which over 38 million voters had participated. What a change! What a descent into Hell!

That descent was paved with the delusions of the Germans, not unlike the way America’s descent into Hell is being paved with delusions of a similar nature today. As Lyndon LaRouche recently stated about the nature of delusion: A person “is fooled, simply, because each such fool wishes to be deceived into any illusion, which, for even a mere moment, ‘makes him or her feel good’ . . . The most effective way in which magicians and others succeed in causing people to fool themselves, is to say to the intended victims: ‘Seeing is believing’ . . . Or, ‘All the eyewitnesses agreed.’ Or, ‘But he had such an honest face!’ So, direct the victim to what you wish them to focus upon, give them the sense-experience they wish to believe, and, often, they are easily fooled.”<sup>12</sup>

It is time that Americans stopped deluding themselves. It is time that we learned the lessons of history from the deluded German experience of 1933-1934. It is time that Americans finally listened to LaRouche.

#### Notes:

1. Michael Liebig, “Recovery Program Could Have Blocked Hitler’s ‘Legal Coup,’” EIR, March 5, 1999.
2. Gabriele Liebig, “How the German Trade Unions Could Have Stopped Hitler,” EIR, April 11, 1977.
3. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1959, p. 190.
4. Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die national-socialistische Machtergreifung*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Köln, 1974, p. 218.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 505.
6. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 195.
7. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. “Once Again, They Have Fooled You,” EIR, June 21, 2002.
8. Shirer, *Op. cit.* p. 198.
9. G. Liebig, *Op. cit.*
10. Bracher, *Op. cit.* pp. 250-251.
11. Helmut Krausnick, *Vorgeschichte und Beginn, des Militärischen Widerstandes gegen Hitler (The Prehistory and Beginning of the Military Resistance to Hitler)*, Europäische Publikation, München, 1956, p. 229.
12. LaRouche, *Op. cit.*



*Hitler ruthlessly manipulated the delusions of every “constituency,” until nothing stood in his way. Thousands attend a Nuremberg rally.*

